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MOTIVES TO GRATITUDE:



A SERMON,
DELIVERED TO THE
BAPTIST CONGREGATION,
MEETING IN
CANNON-STREET, BIRMINGHAM;
On Occasion of
THE PUBLIC THANKSGIVING,
Thursday, Nov. 29, 1798.

By SAMUEL PEARCE, M.A.

TOT LIBER TOTIES MALIS,
TOT AUCTUS TOTIES BONIS,
QUO TANDEM OFFICIO TIBI
CONER SOLVERE GRATES?

BUCHANAN.

BIRMINGHAM,

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A SERMON

BAPTIST CONGREGATION

THE DISCOVERY

OF THE BAPTIST CHURCH IN AMERICA



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TO
THE BAPTIST CHURCH,
IN CANNON-STREET,
BIRMINGHAM,
THIS DISCOURSE,
FIRST PREACHED FOR THEIR INSTRUCTION,
AND NOW PUBLISHED
AT THEIR UNANIMOUS REQUEST,
IS CHEARFULLY INSCRIBED,
AS AN EXPRESSION
OF
THE WELL-DESERVED AFFECTION,
THE UNFEIGNED GRATITUDE,
AND THE BEST WISHES,
OF THEIR
BROTHER AND PASTOR,
THE AUTHOR.

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text. We read, &c. that (Luke)
concerned with a certain village, these men had
and that were lepers, who stood afar off."
You may easily see, that the Jewish law pro-
hibited lepers from coming in close con-
tact with others, so that they were obliged to return to the
villages, or to the separate parts of the country,
and being shut out from other society, they formed
this party of lepers, and called their time
LUKE XVII. 15, 16.

A SERMON.

AND ONE OF THEM, WHEN HE SAW THAT HE WAS
HEALED, TURNED BACK, AND WITH A LOUD VOICE
GLORIFIED GOD, AND FELL DOWN AT HIS FEET,
GIVING HIM THANKS; AND HE WAS A SAMARITAN.

SOME parts of human conduct are so
trifling and unworthy, that the serious mind feels a
mixture of pity and contempt when they come
beneath its notice : other parts are so base and
detestable, that they furnish matter for the deepest
lamentation and regret : whilst others are so just, so
beneficial, or so amiable, that it is impossible to
contemplate them without pleasing admiration.

Such are the effusions of a *grateful heart*—a
heart suitably affected with the kindness it has
received from another, and expressing, to the
utmost reach of language and conduct, its sense of
obligation to its benefactor.

The Bible abounds with fine and striking
specimens of this lovely temper; and few are
more interesting than that presented to us by our

text. We read, v. 12. that "As he (Jesus) entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, who stood afar off."

You may recollect, that the Jewish law prohibited leprous persons from abiding in cities or towns*; so that they were obliged to retire to the villages, or less populous parts of the country; and being shut out from other society, they formed little parties of their own, and passed their time together. It seems one of these was a Samaritan, between whose countrymen and the Jews there were no dealings ordinarily; but their common affliction had, in this instance, suspended the effect of party animosity.

Not presuming to come near, lest they should spread the infection, they stood afar off, and,

v. 13, "They lift up their voices and said, Jesus, master, have mercy on us."

It is probable that they had heard of *his* fame "who went about doing good, healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people," and were therefore encouraged to make application to him for personal relief: and surely they could not have applied to one whose power, or whose kindness, would better justify a hope of success, as the issue proves; for v. 14, "He (without keeping them in suspense) said, "Go, shew yourselves to the Priests." This injunction contained a pretty strong intimation that he would

* Lev. xiii. 46.

work a cure; because the Levitical law directed, that when a leper was *cleansed*, he should go and shew himself to the Priest*; from whom also he was to receive a certificate of his cleansing, in order to his re-admission to social priviledges; and it was easy for these lepers to infer, that Jesus would not have sent them to the priest, had he not intended to make them whole. In adopting this language it probably was our Lord's design to teach them, that to enjoy his blessing they must do his will; and they found their priviledge in their obedience; for, "as they went they were cleansed."

He who was a Samaritan, our text tells us, was so affected with this sudden display of divine grace and power, that both the testimony of the Priest, and the consequent satisfaction he must feel in making use of that testimony, as an introduction to society, from which he had perhaps been long expelled, were less to him than the pleasures of gratitude. He hastens to the presence of his deliverer, glorifies God aloud, falls down at Immanuel's feet, and from the fulness of his heart, gives him the most affectionate thanks.

Many circumstances combine to render this scene highly interesting. His national character as a Samaritan, the dreadful nature of the complaint from which he had been freed, the sudden and unexpected manner in which it was accomplished, the warmth of his gratitude, and the humble

* Lev. xiv. 2.

manner in which he expressed it—all affect the heart; but the concluding part of the narrative commands sensations, which though of an opposite nature, are equally interesting. V. 17, 18, Jesus said, “Were there not *ten* cleansed? but where are the *nine*? There are not found that returned to give glory to God save this stranger.”

Who is there that withholds a censure from these ungrateful lepers? Alas! that censure will more or less involve us all. These men were so eager to enjoy the gift, that they forgot the giver: and who among us can boast exemption from the same iniquity! We are all constantly receiving proofs of the bounty of our God. It is his air that we breathe. It is his light that we enjoy. Every thing which contributes to our security, our support, or our enjoyment; the heavens, the earth, and universal nature, all conspiring to promote our happiness, bear witness to his beneficence, and loudly demand our grateful acknowledgments; but we, too oft, intent on nothing but our personal safety and comfort, and almost, or wholly unmindful of “the Father of lights, from whom every good and perfect gift cometh,” give occasion to the affecting exclamation, “Where are the *nine*?”

In what a base and unworthy light does ingratitude appear, when contrasted with the conduct of the grateful leper? And how does the conduct of this man, by all so much approved, recommend itself to universal imitation! What you all admire,

I wish

I wish you all to become; and to that end I would endeavour to excite your gratitude to God, for the benefits you enjoy, as Men, as Christians, and as Britons.

I. Our good and great Creator hath demands upon us for ardent gratitude as MEN.

How capable of happiness hath he formed us! Every sense is a distinct avenue to enjoyment. And how many objects to meet and gratify our senses croud around? All the infinite diversities of form, and of color, of odour, of taste, and of sound, are designed, directly or indirectly, to administer to the comfort of man. For *him* the sun, with all his genial influence, rises on our world. For *him* the moon imparts her light. For *him* the cattle, the fishes, and the fowl multiply; and to subserve *his* interests, the prolific earth yields her increase of trees, and herbs, and flowers, “from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall.” ‘Tis he

—“for whom the whole creation smiles,
At once, the head, the heart, the mouth of all.”

Man is distinguished above all other beings in the world by his *intellectual powers*, which essentially differ from mere animal instinct, and thereby exalt his nature unspeakably above that of “the brutes which perish.” It is through these *rational faculties* that man is enabled to advance in science, and improve

improve in art. What other animals are when they attain to their full growth, that, unless it be in mere gesticulation, they are till they die; but man is enabled by observation, reading, conversation, reflection, and experiment, to go on towards perfection; and he who is born a babe may die a Newton. It is *this* which renders occasional retirement so full of charms to the man of contemplation and virtue, whilst every object in nature, and every event in providence, supplies him with a new theme for profitable meditation. It is *this* which renders society so sweet and improving, whilst mind unfolds itself to mind, and each individual in the circle participates of the common stock of information. Without this rational faculty we should be wholly incapable of religious exercises. Religion is in fact an abstract thing, because its object is invisible. Man alone, amidst all the animal tenants of the globe, can conceive of property distinct from form and space: he alone, therefore, can be *devout*. The spirit which Jehovah at first breathed into him, pants to find its author; and rises in quest of God: and when the longing soul attains to an acquaintance with the deity, there it takes up its everlasting rest; and solacing itself in the divine embrace, with filial feeling, cries "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon the earth I desire beside thee! My flesh and my heart fail; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever *."

* Psal, lxxiii, 25, 26.

To improve our sense of obligation, let us review the conduct of *divine providence* towards us, from the days of helpless infancy, to the present hour. How hath his hand supplied, and his arm sustained us? With what tender and constant care hath he watched over us? From what unnumbered evils hath he saved us? And with what various and important favors hath he enriched us? And all this whilst we were either too young to reflect upon his goodness, or so abominably ungrateful as to refuse to celebrate it. Have we not on the contrary indulged a thoughtless, trifling, indevout, and impious spirit? Have we not lived in the habitual neglect of prayer and praise? Have we not said in our hearts, when brought by custom to the ordinances of God's house, "What a weariness is it! and when will his sabbaths be over!" Yea, have not some broken through the restraints of conscience and education, to take their carnal pleasure on God's holy day? How many gracious calls, and solemn warnings have we slighted! How many seasons of improvement wasted and abused! And yet he spares us—yet supports us—yet crowns us with loving kindness and tender mercies! O, whilst he is thus passing by us, and proclaiming his name, "The LORD, the LORD God, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness," may we feel the strings of our gratitude effectually touched, till every power bursts forth in unison, and the grateful song, which first sounded on the hill of Zion, be resounded throughout the tribes of man. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within

me, bless his holy name! bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits!

II. Great as our obligations are as men, they are much greater as CHRISTIANS.

Christianity is a system of truth, and goodness, and joy; like its benevolent author, it is "full of grace." It is here that God displays the riches of his mercy, and the greatness of his love*. It breathes "peace and good-will to men," it enlightens by its doctrines; it consoles and cheers by its promises; it purifies by its influence; it displays the duties of the man, the privileges of the christian; and with prospects the most exalted and refined, animates the breasts of all its true disciples.

The excellency of the religion of Jesus can perhaps be no better illustrated, than by comparing it with those which were, and still are practised among the nations who have not been favoured with a revelation from God, "The world, (says the apostle), knew not God, nor glorified him as God." Whilst in other sciences they advanced, in the science of the Deity their motion was retrograde; for the longer they lived, the more ignorant and evil they became; until, in the expressive language of one who knew them well, "Professing themselves wise they became fools, and their foolish heart was darkened." The history of their worship, which still remains, justifies these assertions: nor is it possible to pursue the narrative of their

* Eph. ii. 4. 7.

puerile, wanton, and debauched observances, without astonishment, disgust, and horror. Let Athens, the pride of Greece—famed for knowledge and refinement, producing not only illustrious warriors, but eloquent orators, and renowned philosophers—let Athens teach us the worship of the gentiles.—“There in that polished city, said a witness of unquestionable probity*, have I seen all the inhabitants (more than thirty thousand) drunk at once,” in honor of the god of wine! With shameless faces they indulged, at their religious festivals, the most unlawful passions, and accounted themselves the better saints in proportion to their excessive debaucheries! But, see my brethren, wherever the light of CHRIST hath diffused its rays, these deeds of darkness are no more; and so abhorrent from the gospel is the practice of iniquity, that he who avows himself a friend to sin, is compelled, if he would be consistent, to avow himself also an enemy to Christianity.

Christianity has been justly stiled “A religion for sinners.” Such was the account its blessed author gave of it, and therefore it is a religion fit for *man*, who has revolted from his allegiance to God, cherished a disaffection to him in his heart, and in instances innumerable hath discovered his enmity “by wicked works.”

There has never yet been a sinner in the world, who seriously and impartially considered his guilt, with its causes and consequences, but

* Plato. See Rollin's Ancient History, B. xii. Art. 1. § 2.

has been greatly alarmed, lest the OMNIPOTENT whom he has insulted, should punish him for his crimes; and hence the enquiry, in various forms has been anxiously made, "What must I do to be saved?" The concurrent voice of all the tribes of man assert the necessary connexion which subsists between natural and moral evil, or that pain is the inevitable consequence of sin: nor less general has been the hope that vicarious punishment, or one being suffering in the room of another, would be admitted by the judge of the universe. Hence, in all ages have victims bled on the altars; and however the heathen nations differed from each other as to the deities whom they worshipped, or the circumstances of the rites with which they worshipped them, they all acted on this one principle—that without a substituted victim the sinner must personally undergo the deserved punishment. At first the most perfect animals were selected from the flock or the herd; but at length, apprehensive that these might be inadequate "to take away sin;" and "oppressed by their malady, mankind never rested till they had got to that which they conceived "to be the most precious of all—a human sacrifice! "This practice prevailed in every nation under "heaven, of which we have received any ancient "account. The *Egyptians* had it in the early part "of their monarchy. The *Cretans* likewise had it, "and retained it for a longer time. The nations "of *Arabia* did the same. The people of *Dumab* "in particular, sacrificed every year a child, and
 "buried

" buried it underneath an altar, which they made
 " use of instead of an idol. The *Persians* buried
 " people alive. Amestris, the wife of Xerxes, en-
 " tombed twelve persons quick under ground for
 " the good of her soul. It would be endless to
 " enumerate every city or every province where
 " these dire practices obtained. The *Cyprians*, the
 " *Rhodians*, the *Phoceans*, the *Ionians*, those of
 " *Cbios*, *Lesbos*, *Tenedos*, all had human sacrifices.
 " The natives of the *Tauric Chersonesus* offered up
 " to Diana every stranger whom chance threw
 " upon their coast. The *Romans* were accustomed
 " to the like sacrifices. The *Gauls* and the *Germans*
 " were so devoted to this shocking custom, that no
 " business of any moment was transacted among
 " them without being prefaced with the blood of
 " men. These practices prevailed among *all the*
 " *people of the North*, of whatever denomination—
 " Their chief Gods were *Thor* and *Woden**, whom
 " they thought they could never sufficiently glut
 " with blood. The like custom prevailed to a
 " great degree in *Mexico*, and in most parts of
 " *America*. In *Africa* it is still kept up. The
 " same abominable worship is likewise practised
 " occasionally in the Islands visited by Captain
 " Cook, and other circumnavigators in the *South*
 " *Sea*. Among the nations of *Canaan* the victims
 " were peculiarly chosen, estimating the efficacy of
 " the sacrifice by the dignity of the subject. Their

* From whom THURS, or THORS-DAY, and WERNES, or Wo-
 DENS-DAY, are named.

"own children, and whatever was nearest and
 "dearest to them, were deemed the most worthy
 "offerings to their God. There were particular
 "children brought up for the altar, as sheep are
 "fattened for the shambles; and they were bought
 "and butchered in the same manner. Those
 "who were sacrificed to *Kronus*, or *Moloch*, were
 "thrown into the arms of a molten idol, which
 "stood in the midst of a large fire, and was red with
 "heat. The arms of it were stretched out, with
 "the hands turned upwards, as it were to receive
 "them; yet, sloping downwards, so that they
 "dropt from thence into a glowing furnace below.
 "These were the customs which the Israelites
 "learned of the people of Canaan, and for which
 "they are upbraided by the Psalmist, Psal. cvi.
 "37, 38. *They sacrificed their sons and their*
 "*daughters to Devils—to the idols of Canaan*.*"

Amidst these abominable cruelties, practised in
 the awful name of God, lo! Christianity lifts up
 her voice, and calling to all the mistaken nations,
 cries, 'Deliver your fellow creatures from going
 'down to the pit.—Save them from the immolating
 'knife, or torturing flame, I have found a ransom.
 'God hath laid help upon one mighty to save—
 'Jesus, his immaculate son, dies in the room of
 'guilty men—He, by one offering perfects for
 'ever them that are sanctified; wherefore be it
 'known unto you all, that through this Jesus is
 'preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.'

See Encycloped. Brit. art. SACRIFICE, and Outram, de sacrificiis,
 lib. 1. cap. 22. §. 13—18.

Such

Such is the way of peace, revealed in the religion of Jesus. It admits the justice of the principle, which probably, handed down by tradition from the earliest age, the nations had so generally adopted; but, rejecting all their uncommanded victims, it exhibits a sacrifice

“Of nobler name, and richer blood than they.”

It teaches the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh, for the purpose of our salvation; declaring that Jesus “died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.”

Now this, as far as we can conceive, is the highest act of benevolence that ever engaged the attention of the universe. Our Lord speaks of it in terms, which because they are indefinite, are therefore of so much stronger import, saying, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son,” to save sinners who believe. And indeed a transaction so new, yet so marked with love and mercy—a plan so well adapted to secure all the perfections of the deity from dishonour, whilst it gives equal solidity to the believing sinners hopes, must create new views, and new feelings, throughout all the vast dominions of Jehovah, wherever it is published, understood, and believed. Angels are spoken of as *now* prying into this mystery of incarnate love, and as finally joining with the redeemed in heaven, who celebrate the mediatorial glories of our Lord the Lamb. And shall *we* remain unmoved, uninterested, ungrateful? Forbid it, O God of Salvation!

* John iii. 16.

“ Praise ye the Lord! Praise God in the
 “ sanctuary. Kings of the earth and all people,
 “ princes and all judges of the earth. Both young
 “ men and maidens, old men and children. Let
 “ them praise the name of the Lord—who hath
 “ raised up an horn of salvation. Praise ye the
 “ Lord.”

Hard—*bard* as that heart must be, which remains insensate amidst these meltings of divine compassion—this exuberance of the bounty of a God, need I go without these walls to find such as have often heard the love of God in Christ Jesus read to them from the scriptures, and declared from the pulpit, without any emotions but of weariness and disgust! Blessed be God, the religion of Jesus makes provision also for the conquest of the rebellious heart! When our Lord ascended on high, he sent forth his holy spirit, to renovate, subdue, and sanctify the objects of his love. Of this spirit are all christians made partakers; so that each saint from experience can say, “ The tabernacle of God is with men, and he *doth* dwell among them.”

Of this spirit have *we* been made partakers? Surely *this* is an additional motive to our gratitude. Hath Jesus healed us of the leprosy of sin? O let us, with the leper, turn back to-day—let us fall at his feet—let us give him thanks—and glorify God “ who giveth such power unto men.”

I might here remind you of the important privileges you enjoy, in freedom of access to God—the endearing paternal relation in which he stands
 to

to you—the sweet communion you have with his people—the public ordinances of his house—and the prospects opened to you in the gospel of “an
“house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

Who can review the long catalogue of blessings secured to him as the disciple of Jesus, without feeling the sacred spark already kindling in his bosom, which enflames the host of heaven with gratitude, and teaches them with a loud voice to cry, “Worthy is the lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. Amen.”

III. Though the blessings we enjoy as Christians claim our highest praise, yet much gratitude is due from us as BRITONS; and as we are invited by the supreme magistrate to national thanksgiving, on this day, I should ill answer the end of our meeting did I not take notice of national mercies.

It is to be greatly lamented that we are more disposed to discontent on account of what we have not, than to gratitude for what we enjoy. Else should we ever cease thankfully to reflect, that we are placed in a climate so highly conducive to comfort and health—that we have been so long exempt from those fatal epidemics, which in other countries, so frequently almost depopulate a district, and by which some of our acquaintance have this very year been cut off in America—that the means of decent sustenance may be attained here with as little labor, and as much certainty as in any civilized nation—that provisions are plentifully furnished
from

from our own island, and that the divine goodness hath so richly supplied us these last years, that the necessaries of life are not advanced but diminished in price—that our persons and properties are protected by the laws from violence or injury—that our religious priviledges, though not perfect, are so great, having bibles in our own language, which we are allowed to read, and judge of for ourselves, without the dread of a heathen tribunal, or a popish inquisition—and that we may assemble for divine worship where, and when, and how we please? Ah, had the primitive christians, or our own ancestors, but been possessed of religious priviledges equal to ours, they would have taken down their harps from the willows, and cried, “ Thanks be unto God for these unspeakable gifts.”

But these are not the immediate blessings for which we are met to express our gratitude to-day. Recent events, in which we are all interested, are now commemorated; and I feel it my duty, to point out to you the blessing for which we should now give thanks—to urge your thankfulness by suitable motives—and to direct it in its proper exercise.

I would, in the first place, state to you the precise blessing for which your thanks should now rise to heaven. Should any one expect that I shall introduce the *destruction* of our foes, by the late victories gained off the coasts of Egypt and Ireland, as the object of pleasure and gratitude, he will be disappointed. The man who can take pleasure at the destruction of his fellow men, is a cannibal at heart;

heart; and for *him* New Zealand is a more fit habitation than civilized Europe. Let the savage secure the scalps of his enemies, as monuments of his triumphs—let him collect the blood, yet smocking from their veins; and with ferocious joy quaff the sanguinary draught; but to the heart of him who calls himself a disciple of the merciful Jesus, let such pleasure be an everlasting stranger. Since in that sacred volume, which I revere as the fair gift of heaven to man, I am taught, that “of one blood God hath made all nations,” it is impossible for me not to regard every man as my brother, and to consider, that national differences ought not to excite personal animosities. Let a human soul be disembodied, and to what nation—to what colour, to what clime does it then belong? Let it have tenanted what body it may, it is vast in its capacities, it is immortal in its duration; and who, with these sentiments, can reflect on the combustion of the French Admiral’s ship in the late action, when a thousand immortal souls—(alas, how few prepared for the event!) were in a moment precipitated into eternity, without a groan!

But though we dare not rejoice at the misery of others, we ought to be thankful for the security we enjoy ourselves. It is well known that France has long meditated and threatened a descent upon our coasts, and an invasion of our country. Proposals to this purpose have been made in her assemblies, and she has actually attempted to ensure success to her designs against us, by her efforts to gain possession of
Ireland,

Ireland, our sister kingdom. Had she succeeded in establishing her power there, where she might have victualled her fleets, and recruited her armies, England, in all probability, would have become an easy prey.

But God, the great guardian of our isle, has mercifully prevented the accomplishment of her first object. Ireland is not yet a department of France; and therefore our fears need not run high for Britain. The capture or dispersion of the ships and forces destined to that service, and the weakening the naval power of France by subsequent conquests, whereby she is rendered, as far as we can judge, incapable, for the present, of renewing her hostile attacks, are certainly occasions of real pleasure to every friend to his country, and of gratitude to every British christian. It is then to this one object I would direct your attention—**THE SALVATION OF BRITAIN FROM AN INVADING POWER.** And to excite your gratitude for this, let me lay before you the following considerations.

I. If the French had succeeded in taking Ireland, and had in consequence landed an hostile army on our coasts, what horrid consequences would have ensued!

What an interruption would it have occasioned to our trade and manufactures! How precarious would it have rendered our obtaining food for our bodies! What fore anxieties and gloomy forebodings would it have excited in our bosoms! What a pause would it have put to the pleasures of social worship!

worship ! Where would have been our peaceful and happy sabbaths ! What tumult and disorder would it have excited among the lower orders of the people, many of whom, taking advantage of the general confusion, would have gone from house to house, plundering the peaceable inhabitants, whilst all, and worse than all the horrors of the former Riots, would have disgraced and distressed Birmingham ! What suspicions would have existed between one inhabitant and another ! What domestic misery should we have witnessed in our now tranquil dwellings !—our wives and children weeping, whilst we, called to go out against the common foe, were taking, perhaps, a last farewell ; they not knowing but we might fall in the field, and our bosoms torn with anguish, lest their honor should be violated, or the means of subsistence taken from them, so that after all our efforts to make “ the present day still happier than the last,” they should be abandoned to famine and death !

How dreadful would be the roar of the destructive cannon, and the din of clashing arms ! What a spectacle would present itself, when, baptized in their own blood, we saw acquaintance, neighbors, kindred, friends, parents, lying in our streets ; whilst the cries of orphans, the groans of mothers, and the shrieks of widows, compleated the horror of the scene !

Good God ! who in thy abundant mercy hast saved us from realizing the scenes, which now only our imaginations paint, save us also from the curse of an ungrateful heart !

2. My brethren, let your gratitude be still heightened by reflecting on the moral character of our country, and the high demerit of its crimes. How in this land, where God is so much known, is he also awfully blasphemed! How are his holy sabbaths profaned! How debauched in general are our youth! How luxurious the opulent! And with what rapid strides does infidelity advance, whilst she receives a flattering welcome from all classes of Britons, from the courtier to the inhabitant of the cottage! How have the children of christian parents declined from the piety of their ancestors! How cool is the devotion in our sanctuaries, and how many families call not upon the name of the Lord! What "sordid avarice, and low arts of commerce," stain the characters of many, eminent for rank and opulence! Whilst in the language of a late writer, "Our wealth and plenty have been abused to an amazing luxury, and our liberty to a boundless licentiousness. Many act as if they had no other way of showing that they are free, but by casting off all restraints, and setting themselves loose from all the ties of religion and virtue."

Who could have been surprized, if long ere now, the Lord had "avenged himself on such a nation as this!" But, "slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy," whilst almost all Europe beside has been involved in the miseries of war, he still preserves our island a quiet habitation, and, sitting under our own vines and fig trees, none are permitted to make us afraid—"He hath not dealt so with every nation; praise ye the Lord."

3. Nor let it be forgotten, that this is a mercy granted *in answer to prayer*. Often from within these walls have our fervent cries arisen to the throne of God, that he would abandon us neither to civil tumults, nor hostile foreigners; and now that he hath heard our prayer, shall we refuse him praise? "O come, let us give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever: we cried unto him, and he hath helped us, and delivered us from all our fears!"

Lastly, whilst I indulge the hope that your hearts reverberate the invitation to praise, I would offer you some directions as to the manner in which you should express it; and

1. Let us express our sense of obligation for national mercies, by breaking off from national sins. Let each one of us consider, that his individual crimes go towards augmenting the mass of national iniquity. Let none of us go on any longer to provoke the Lord to jealousy; and if the fear of national judgments has not power to restrain our corruptions, let a sense of national mercies engage us to repentance and reformation.

2. Let us discover *our* gratitude by endeavoring to excite that of *others*. Whilst the multitude, who on the one hand charge all the miseries of a nation on its governors, instead of its crimes, attribute on the other all our security merely to the valor of our commanders, and their forces at sea or on land, let us strive to raise their views to a much higher cause of safety—let us teach our neighbors,

our

our children, our servants, that "*Salvation is only of the LORD.*"

3. Let us shew our gratitude to God, by our benevolence to our distressed fellow creatures.

We read that when God delivered the Jews from Babylon, and days of thanksgiving were appointed; the injunction was, "Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions to them for whom nothing is prepared." And when should our hearts be opened to the miseries of others; but at the moment when we are expressing our sense of the divine liberality to us; indeed he is an hypocrite, and not a sincere worshipper, who pretends to gratitude without benevolence.

But whom should we select as objects of our benevolence to-day? Can we think on any objects more suitable than those whose miseries are occasioned by that very event, which furnishes us with matter of joy and praise—I mean the widows and orphans of the brave men who have lately fallen in the defence of their country?

I am extremely happy to reflect that a measure has been adopted, which, in all likelihood will unite most, if not all the congregations in Birmingham, in this becoming charity. Too long separated by mutual jealousies, let us gladly embrace a proposal which breathes a spirit of conciliation, and prove by our liberality this day, that we are steady friends to the interests of our country, and to the interests of benevolence.

F I N I S,

